

NetSupport DNA 4.5

A flexible, feature-packed asset-management solution that's priced perfectly for small businesses

SCORE ★★★★★

Keeping track of your assets can be a challenge, especially for smaller organisations whose IT functions may have evolved in an ad-hoc fashion. If that's you then NetSupport DNA could be a godsend: it handles all the key functions of hardware and software inventory, application metering and licence management – and additionally includes internet access controls, device and energy monitoring. It can even analyse print costs.

Installing the server software is a simple process; we had it up and running on a Windows Server 2016 host in just ten minutes. We then used the deployment tool to push the DNA agent out to our Windows 7, 10, Server 2012 R2 and Server 2016 systems. This too was painless, taking less than ten seconds for each one, with no reboots required. The latest version of DNA also features updated agents for Chrome OS and macOS devices, although the macOS software has to be installed manually.

NetSupport has also improved DNA's ability to monitor iOS devices. Previous releases could only provide basic hardware inventory for iPads and iPhones, but the app now allows you to track and limit internet access

as well. It's not quite as simple as it may sound, though, as it requires your users to browse with the DNA app, rather than Safari. You'll probably need to enforce this by finding a mobile device management solution that can block Apple's native browser.

Once your agents are in place, they automatically start reporting back to the DNA server. The console begins to fill up with system and software inventories, plus details of app usage, websites visited and printing activity. We were impressed by how accurate and detailed this information was: one of the systems in our test was a Dell PowerEdge R640 server with uncommon dual Xeon Gold 6130 CPUs, but DNA had no problem identifying the model, clock speed and number of cores.

As new systems are discovered they're dropped into a default group, with a pre-defined policy assigned. This enables a useful spread of features, including application and internet metering, alerting and print monitoring. USB device and log-on controls aren't enabled by default, but it's easy to add them, or assign custom policies to selected groups of agents.

The main DNA control console has barely changed in the past few releases, but that's no bad thing as it puts all the key features at your

ABOVE DNA presents a complete overview of all network activity and running costs

"The main console has barely changed in the past few releases, but it puts all the key features at your fingertips"

BELOW The new Web Browser app brings internet metering to iOS devices

fingertips. The central pane gives an overview of all monitored systems, the number of web pages being accessed, energy and printing costs, apps being run and hardware changes.

Switch to the Explorer tab and you're greeted with a real-time thumbnail view, so you can see at a glance what's happening on the desktops of all systems in the selected

group. For a closer look, the activity monitor provides in-depth details of all log-on, application and internet activity, which can be filtered to focus on specific devices, groups and time periods.

Power usage estimates are another useful feature; you can break these down by server, PC and portable device classes, or generate a complete rundown of your power usage and utility costs. And if you don't like what you see, you can assign a power schedule to selected agents – for example, to ensure desktops aren't left running overnight.

It's just as easy to enforce internet and application usage policies. Once usage reports have been gathered, you can simply drag websites and applications into restricted lists. It's a smart way to manage what goes on on your network – and NetSupport promises that the next version of DNA will be even smarter, including file scanning for GDPR compliance, system error alerting and enhanced activity monitoring.

NetSupport DNA 4.5 offers a superb set of features, is a cinch to use and is very affordable. SMBs looking to bring their IT systems and users under control should place it at the top of their list. **DAVE MITCHELL**

REQUIREMENTS

DNA server: Windows 7/Server 2008 upwards. **Agents available for:** Windows, macOS, Linux, Android, iOS, Windows Mobile

